

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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Opening Statement of Chairman Bob Stump General Debate on H.R. 2586 The Fiscal Year 2002 National Defense Authorization Act

Mr. Speaker, on August 1, the Armed Services Committee reported H.R. 2586 on a strong bipartisan vote of 58 to 1.

The bill authorizes appropriations for the Department of Defense and for the Department of Energy national security programs for a total of \$343 billion in budget authority, consistent with the President's amended defense budget request.

Mr. Speaker, normally at this point we cover all the various initiatives in the bill and why this is a strong proposal to support our men and women in uniform that deserves the strong support of the House. This bill is all that and more.

This bill contains the largest military pay raise since 1982 and provides significant increases in funding for critical military readiness accounts in order to halt the decade long decline in military readiness.

The bill also makes great strides in beginning to fix our crumbling military infrastructure and makes a modest down payment toward the next priority - the modernization of our aging fleet of combat equipment.

However, this bill also reflects the realities that existed prior to last Tuesday's terrorist attacks against the United States.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, have changed our nation. They exposed our vulnerability to terrorism and removed forever the belief that Americans here at home were safe from the kinds of barbaric attacks that have occurred against our citizens, our military personnel, and our friends and allies overseas. We know now that America itself is a target, and that terrorists will not hesitate to use whatever means at their disposal to kill innocent Americans on a massive scale.

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The terrorists' actions were deliberate and calculated. Our response must be as well. Once again, our armed forces are being called upon to defend our great nation - this time from the scourge of terrorism. I have no doubt that they will rise to the occasion. But we must ensure that they have the proper tools and resources to do the job - now and in the future.

H.R. 2586 provides our men and women in uniform with the tools they need to confront the challenges our country will face in the next decade and beyond. This bill goes a long way toward helping our military recover from the devastating effects of the chronic underfunding that took place over the last eight years. It is a critical step toward ensuring that the United States is ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead, including the challenge of meeting and defeating international terrorism.

This bill recognizes that the war against terrorism will not be won quickly and that the United States will require additional capabilities to deal with the threat terrorism poses to Americans. To this end, the bill authorizes roughly \$6 billion for Department of Defense programs to combat terrorism. Moreover, the bill reflects the need to modernize America's military capabilities so that our country's vulnerability to other threats - including ballistic missiles - will be eliminated.

This bill is a good bill. It is carefully balanced to address the most critical needs of our military forces. It is worthy of every Member's strong support. However, despite the increases contained in the bill, additional resources will be needed. America's defenses cannot be rebuilt in a single year. The war against terrorism cannot be won with a single year of defense increases. Our ability to protect our citizens against other emerging threats cannot be assured with a single year of defense increases. The effort to improve our nation's defenses and our people's security must be significant and it must be sustained.

That said, it is clear that the funding levels in this bill will not be sufficient to support the level of effort that the Department must undertake to hunt down and root out the perpetrators of last week's attack. I understand that the Pentagon and the Administration are in the process of identifying the additional resources required and we hope to receive a proposal to address these needs soon.

Rather than wait until that proposal arrives, I urge the House to proceed with the approval of this bill and allow us to adjust it as the outlines of the Administration's revised budget proposal become clearer. This bill is too important and contains too many critical legislative tools necessary for the Department to conduct its business to fall victim to the press of schedule.

I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation and reserve the balance of my time.

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